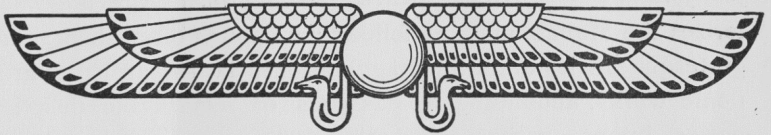


"Point out the 'Way'—However dimly, and lost among the host—as does the evening star to those who tread their path in darkness."



MERCURY.

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THE BHAGAVAD GITA.

[An address delivered on White Lotus Day, 1895, to a joint meeting of the two Honolulu Lodges, T. S., the Aloha and the Hawaii.]

THE Bhagavad Gita, although a work or treatise complete in itself, must not be confused with another Sanskrit work called Bhagavata. The Bhagavad Gita being only a very small portion of what is known as the *Mahabharata*, the great Sanskrit epic poem of old India, a natural inference that might, therefore be made, is that, in order to more readily understand the Gita and many of the allusions it contains, a general knowledge of the *Mahabharata* must be requisite. Yet, most probably, very few are the Theosophical students of the Gita who have ever thought it worth their while even to glance over the *Mahabharata*, several complete translations of which have been published.*

The Indians claim for the *Mahabharata* over 100,000 slokas, or lines of thirty-two syllables; this makes it the longest poem ever written, about eight times the bulk of the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined; and its admirers do not hesitate to class it also as the first poem in the world, on account of its worth and beauty, of its pathos and brilliancy of inspiration, and for its moral teachings and fire of patriotism as well as for its wealth of incidents and hidden knowledge; in this respect, it is certainly entitled to

*The most satisfactory translation is said to be the one just issued in Calcutta, by Sundari Bala Roy.

justly rank before Greek poems. Even Prof. J. Eggeling characterizes the Mahabharata as follows : "Though often disfigured by grotesque fancies and wild exaggerations, the Indian Epics are yet noble works, abounding in passages of remarkable descriptive power, intense pathos and high poetic grace and beauty; and while, as works of art, they are inferior to the Greek epics, in some respects they appeal far more strongly to the romantic mind of Europe, namely, by their loving appreciation of natural beauty, their exquisite delineation of womanly love and devotion, and their tender sentiment of mercy and forgiveness." (*Cyclopaedia Britannica*.) And a more flattering appreciation could hardly be expected from a critic like Eggeling, since he unfortunately belongs to that blind class of Orientalists who stubbornly refuse to see in the Indian sacred literature any thing outside of the dead-letter husks, and who, therefore, cannot realize what treasures of truth and positive knowledge lay hidden under what to them seems "grotesque fancies and wild exaggerations."

The Indians themselves, who after all, ought to be the best judges of the merit of their national Epics, claim for the Mahabharata divine inspiration, and its very origin is enshrouded in a becoming mystery. The authorship of it is attributed to a sage or Mahatma called Vyasa; but, in his own introduction, Vyasa acknowledges to be only the writer; then again Vyasa is not the individual name of any particular man. The word means a revealer, one who expands or amplifies, who explains a mystery to the profane, and it has been applied as a title of respect to the highest Gurus of old India; in a sense, Mahomet and Luther might be called the Vyasas of Arabia and Germany, or Shakespeare and Milton, those of the English race, and there have been many men of the Vyasa kind among the Aryans. In fact, the one who gave the Mahabharata to the world, was the twenty-eighth one of note mentioned in Indian lore, and quite a different man from that other sage of same appellation, who first compiled the Sacred Vedas at a much earlier date. However, his true name is lost, as even the exact date of his existence, which the Orientalists, with their mania for belittling all Indian Antiquities, assign to only about 1400 B. C., while it ought certainly to be carried back a couple of milleniums, though this is a matter of very exigu-

ous importance as compared with the real value of the work.

On its face, or literal meaning, the Mahabharata deals with a most critical period in the history of the Bharatas or Aryans of India, the period that closed the preceding age of Bronze (Dwapara Yuga) and ushered in the present dark cycle of Iron, the Kali-Yuga. This event took place, according to all Indian computations, 3,102 years B. C., or nearly 5000 years ago, the small cycle of five mil-lenniums closing in fact between November 1897 and March 1898, A. D. Although having here no time to undertake an analysis of this enormous poem, yet a few words about its subject may not be amiss.

The last period of the Dwapara age had seen a rapid increase of evil, or as the sanskrit puts it, "through the decline of Dharma, men had become Rakshasas, devils;" and its close threatened to be marked by a most iniquitous spoliation, by which—if allowed to take place—the dawning Kali-Yuga would have opened on a nation in which all notions of right and justice would have been trampled upon and obliterated by those very rulers to whom was entrusted the duty of preserving virtue and equity. Thus, the war was the "karmic punishment for the selfish spirit developed in the previous cycle," just as the various battles that man has to fight in his successive sub-lunary lives are the karmic results of his conduct in previous incarnations. The exoteric cause of the war was more especially as follows: the suzerainty over all the royal families then living in India, belonged to the Lunar Dynasty, whose seat was at Hastinapura, near the site of the modern Delhi. This dynasty was then represented by two brothers, Dhritarashtra, the elder, disqualified from reigning by blindness, and Pandu, the younger, who legally did reign until, through fraud and wicked means, he and his five sons, the Pandavas, were deprived of their rights by the hundred Kauravis or sons of the elder, disqualified brother. After various attempts at reconciliation, these last having repeatedly broken their pledges, the whole chivalry of India, amounting to over two millions of men, were called upon and assembled on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, to settle the question by the force of arms. The situation was so ominous, that divine interference, adjustment and advice became necessary, and Krishna, the princely Jesus of India, an Avatar or special incarnation of

the God Vishnu, came to the help of right and justice, acting as a counsellor to Arjuna, the most brilliant of the Pandavas. A great portion of the Mahabharata is thus especially the narrative of the great battle which took place, lasting eighteen days (a mystic number) and ending in the annihilation of the Kauravas and the death of the various heroes, including Krishna; after which the Pandavas, becoming disgusted with life and headed by their eldest brother Yudhishtira, started off to seek admission into Indra's heaven; but one by one, they dropped off on the road, until Yudhishtira alone, with a faithful dog who had followed him, at last reaches the gate of heaven; but upon the dog being refused admission, the king nobly declines to enter without him, whereupon the dog turns out to be the god of justice himself, who had assumed that shape in order to test the king's virtue; then again after having entered, the king, discovering that neither his faithful wife nor his brothers were there, insists on leaving the place, to go and share their fate in the nether worlds where they were expiating their sins, when this again turns out to be only a last trial, and they are all re-united in eternal bliss.

Thus, considered merely in its outside aspect, the Mahabharata may have been with some apparent reason, qualified as a "miscellaneous collection of epic poetry, consisting of a heterogeneous mass of legendary and didactic matter, worked into and around a central heroic narrative." But, in reality, it must be well understood that the whole of this poem—like most of the religio-philosophical Sanskrit poems written by Initiates—the contrary assertion of Professor Max Muller notwithstanding, is purposely written in an allegorical, mystical style, which really "hides occult meanings of various kinds, quite separate from the ordinary or apparent one, and describes different aspects of things, of which the purely historical is merely the least important," though probably the one which has attracted principally the attention of foreign students, and on which they have committed quite enough blunders.

Then again, we must not forget to mention that many a verse, even whole slokas are kept back from the public editions and taught only by Gurus to Chelas pledged to secrecy. This fact alone will tend to justify the assertion that, as a whole, as well as

in its separate parts, the Mahabharata is really the sacred history of Man and of the entire Kosmos, in their evolutionary development, parts of which cannot be divulged in this cycle; consequently, it can be read differently, as applied to the human individuality, or to the Kosmogogenesis, or to the evolution and contentions in the astral regions, or to the higher Hierarchies in Nature, or merely to the moral, spiritual or physical abstract planes, upon the constant basis of occult correspondence, so tersely formulated by the dictum: "As above, so below." In fact, it is "a gold mine of occult knowledge, about the supersensuous planes of nature." Also, as one of our best writers, Subba Row, concisely puts it: "historically, the great battle was a mighty struggle between the two branches of the foremost royal family of the times; philosophically, it is the great battle in which the human spirit has to fight against the lower passions in the physical body."

Hence, every name, every fact brought into the poem is allegorical: the two contending armies are those two collections of faculties which tend to drag down the human soul or to raise it up; the generals, their weapons; the part they take in the battle, the place where they fight. Everything not only refers to real places and persons, but also has a special meaning in relation to man's evolution and his trials, the growth of his soul, and the conditions of his mind; and consequently, an understanding of all this is necessary, not only to grasp the full import of the poem, but even to study intelligently the special portion or fragment called the Bhagavad Gita.*

Now then, let us consider more especially this part of our subject. The Bhagavad Gita is much more widely known than the rest of the Mahabharata, and it has even been so celebrated, so appreciated, that it has been translated into many languages, both Asiatic and European, and it has been commented on not only by nearly every Indian philosopher, or Jnani of note—from the

*None of the English translations, no more than those in other languages, are absolutely, perfectly satisfactory, as may well be expected from the difficulties of finding translators fully versed in the occult meaning, and of rendering, from the original into other tongues, the occult phraseology in such a manner as to preserve the use of the various keys; and the deficiencies tell heavily on the earnest student, whose troubles can fully be repaid only if he studies in the original text. So, it is with admiration that I quote the example of the Theosophists of the Paris Lodge (France,) who endeavored to obviate this difficulty by heroically setting out to learn the Bhagavad by heart in Sanskrit, thus anticipating the time, now fast foreshadowed, when, according to Indian prophecy, that noble language will again come into universal use.

points of view of each of the four principal great philosophical schools of Sankaracharya, Ramanuja, Madhva and Vallabha—but also by many foreigners; in fact, “more commentaries have been written on it, than have been made by the Christian Fathers on St. John’s Revelation,” and that is certainly saying a great deal.*

As already stated, the Bhagavad Gita is a short episode, containing merely 770 slokas, of which 699 are allowed to be published. Its title means literally the Song of the Blessed One, the Lord’s Lay, and has been fitly translated the “Song Celestial.” It is in the form of a familiar dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, divided into the mystical number of eighteen chapters, corresponding to the number of the present Yuga, the eighteenth of the cycle we belong to, and also representing the seventeen stages through which the candidate for occult knowledge must pass before reaching the eighteenth, or Mukta, liberation from the troubles of existence. Subba Row also gives us to understand that, in this number eighteen, there is a special mystery concerning the personality of Krishna, but as this cannot be revealed, we must content ourselves by remembering that, in the Indian literature, eighteen represents seven and eleven, therefore symbolizing the warfare of the seven human principles against their eleven Rudras or enemies, which must be destroyed, if man does not want to be overcome by them, though some commentators hold that seven and eleven are respectively “blinds” for the *three* higher and the *four* lower principles. Whichever may be the case, it shows at once that whole Gita is built on an occult, mystical basis. Therefore, what has been said above, about the occult meanings and

*Among the later theosophical ones, I may mention a very valuable review made by W. Brehan, in Vols. II and III of the *Path*, (and since writing the above, another essay by the same scholar, in *Path*, Vol. X.,) a series of lectures by Subba Row in Vol. VIII of the *Theosophist*, only this last must be used with caution, as it was written in a sectarian spirit and caused some warm protestations from several other Theosophists and from H. P. B. herself; a good analysis by E. Adams in *Siftings*, Vol. 6, N. I., another by A. N. Sastri in *Theosophist*, Vol. XIV; (some commentaries, unfortunately unfinished;) and also “Thoughts on Bhagavad Gita,” by a Brahmin F. T. S., published by the Kumbakonam T. Lodge. But, in the event of my words inducing some of my readers to start in the study of B. G., I must repeat S. Row’s advice, that this work should stand on its own merits, without any commentary: “Do not rely on a host of commentaries, which will only confuse you, but try to interpret—and understand—the text for yourselves, as far as your intelligence will allow.” Every student should make it a point to study it on the text itself, and through his own light and whatever keys he may possess, and by being left to himself, he will gradually see more, his understanding will deepen as he advances, for a good deal more is gained by concentration or thought and meditation, than by crowding in a number of printed commentaries of purported explanations. And here a practical hint: the student ought first to go through the whole of the book, and next try to differentiate clearly the teachings of each of the eighteen chapters.

interpretations of the Mahabharata, is, if possible, still more correct and important in relation to this special portion, so that, though more distinctly on its very face, a metaphysical and religious Treatise—in fact the most metaphysical extant—yet it can not be read intelligently without certain keys. Failing these, at first sight, the Bhagavad Gita will seem either a dry philosophical dissertation or an equally dry devotional effusion. But the beginner must bear in mind that every word being mystical, or, as H. P. B.'s Glossary says "pre-eminently occult or esoteric," it has therefore many various meanings: "What makes B. G. so precious in the estimation of the Indian students of Occultism," says one of the modern commentators, "is that, besides the ordinary, apparent meaning, already in itself so excellent and profound there are also several occult interpretations and significations," the whole argument of it being typical of the human life and of the incessant battles fought between the opposing hosts of Man's Kauravas or lower impulses, wickedly striving for unjust domination, and his Pandavas, or tendencies of the higher nature: "We are all of us called upon to kill out all our passions and desires, not that they are necessarily evil in themselves, but because their influence must be annihilated before we can establish ourselves on the higher plane." Our Pandavas must some day prevail, but the sooner the better for us.

[To be continued.]

THEOSOPHY—ITS INSPIRATION.

THE complaint has been often made that Theosophy is cold; in fact, the charge is of frequent occurrence, as expressing the effect which the main ideas embraced in the Theosophical movement have upon some people before they have entered upon an investigation of the details and ramifications of those teachings. None should know better than a student of the Occult Science that a thought expressed in words is the pulse of the mind; and those who desire the life and health of the Theosophical movement, who desire the increase of human happiness and wisdom, necessarily watch for the indications which betray the conditions of its growth: and if in the minds of those to whom these teachings are presented, an opposite effect occurs to that which it is

ostensibly designed to produce, it becomes necessary in the interests of both parties to find the cause or causes of such a contrary effect.

From a definition of Theosophy it will be seen at once how illogical such charges are. Theosophy means Divine Wisdom—God Wisdom—or the wisdom of the Gods. When first we come within its radiance, it is but the chill of approaching death to our selfish, worldly wisdom that we feel; the glow of Divine Wisdom comes as the result of the continued effort to be perfect, as the “Father in Heaven is perfect.” This is a repetition of Buddha’s teaching as well. Modern Theology has not insisted upon this union on earth with the Father—the True Self—the at-one-ment. It has not concerned itself with explaining how it was possible to become perfect as the Father in Heaven; but, on the contrary, has conjured a plan by which, not only was the command to be evaded, but imperfectly developed beings lifted into an eternity of freedom from suffering and ignorance.

Theosophy, then, is not the wisdom of man as we know him, not the wisdom of the present, but the knowledge obtained by men who have thereby become gods, and having traveled the path, surely, they are able to tell others something of that which they have learned on the long journey. The Past of the Gods is before us—is our future!

Theosophy, then, we may say, is a collection of certified facts, a knowledge of fundamental laws and basic principles governing man himself—his relation to the Universe and to his fellow-man.

A word more as to Gods. If some shall question, “Are there Gods, then?” I shall answer that such belief has been handed down from ancient times by all the great religions of the world, not excepting the Hebrew-Christian Scripture. In Genesis, it is related “Man ate of the tree of knowledge, and he knew good and evil.” The Lord, discovering the fact, said, “Man has become as one of *us*,”—the Elohim or Sephiroth, the interpretation or deduction being, that to know good from evil was to enter the Path of Knowledge that eventually leads to Divine Wisdom, or the knowledge that is God-like; and if, to have the experience, the development, the thoughts of a man is to be a man; if to be a woman, it is necessary to live, think and know what a woman’s

life is, we may conclude that to think, act and acquire knowledge like a God, is to be a God. It does not follow because we, personally, are far from such attainment, and that of the thousands of lives that surround us not any have reached such heights of growth, that, consequently, no such growth is possible; that we have no grounds of proof, or hope, at least, of an actual divine becoming which now is merely an ideal. For, if we but carry the command of the last great Spiritual Teacher, "who was man, yet a God," "The Father made manifest," to its logical outcome, what will it lead to? "Either we must discredit his judgment, wisdom and authority altogether, or, accepting his word in one case, include all. When we become perfect as our "Father in Heaven is perfect"—His Father and ours, what shall we become? GODS! LORDS!! Does not the command imply also the possibility of success? Theosophy insists upon the fulfillment of every command of Jesus of Nazareth, and provides a way for the accomplishment of the same, though not, it is true, by another paying the price. Does such teaching seem cold? If so, why? Let us see if its cause is not to be found in the selfishness of our nature; and if we find it is so, what ought we to do? Coldness and warmth are relative terms, the description of a state of feeling in us as compared with another state of feeling which we have been or still are conscious of. The coldness of Theosophy, then, is a state of feeling in us, produced by the presentment of a system of thought in contradistinction to another system of thought, which is more agreeable to us. And in virtue of what do we find Theosophy less agreeable to us? In that it curtails our hoped-for and expected release from the struggle of future growth. The world-weary, the unsuccessful do not look with favor upon the likelihood of having to go through with innumerable repetitions of earthly struggles by being reincarnated; not that they are tired of living, but that, once being dead, they rather incline to stay so and never return to earth, providing they find their ideals of life after death equal to their expectations. It does, indeed, seem a dreary outlook to these minds, so crushed, so lacking in the push and power to elbow themselves into the front ranks of fortune; it is not strange if Reincarnation should seem undesirable to them. But could these feel assured that after a long

period of rest, they were to wake as from a refreshing slumber, to a condition on earth that would give them a successful, happy, healthy life, what would be the temperature of their sentiments, think you? Would they then claim that Theosophy is cold?

There is another to whom I can well imagine the Theosophy does not commend itself. I mean that mind to whom the vicarious atonement in its literal or Theological interpretation, seems an acceptable and efficient method of developing the understanding and virtues of the true or real self. It is a forcing, hot-house method, and naturally seems warm. But, in comparison with the process of the experienced soul who has stood the storms of wind and weather of many a cycling life, it permits no comment, if the question be put upon merit as to the justice and logic involved between Theo-philosophy *versus* Theology. The principle of Universal Love embodied in the principle of Justice would infinitely outweigh the puny, contemptible self-love, that prompts man to interpret the law of eternal life, or salvation upon the same plan that he has his financial transactions. If you have been born selfish enough or careless enough of your fellow-man so that you are indifferent as to what his future may be, you may find a plan that permits the few to enjoy the riches of the next world, as they do of this, quite acceptable to you. But, if, "with your whole nature on fire, with a sense of injustice against a plan too limited to fit the necessities of all humanity, you are here presented with another, wherein all men enjoy equal opportunities before the Law, equal reward for equal labor, wherein equal time is afforded to all at equal valuation, and which is not inconsistent with Universal Love and Brotherhood," you may find its cool justice but a balmy breeze that fans the fever of resentment from your mind. If you have believed that eternal happiness was to be yours on quitting this body in which you are now confined, irrespective of what disposition or character you may have exhibited while on earth, it may seem cold to you to be told that you have not yet developed all the latent possibilities of your true self, and that this earth is the field of our growth, while death is but the harvest time of what the true self has sown, and the personality has tended. After long years in the belief that we, as George Washington or Minna Brown, were at once to attain to an

eternity of perfect happiness on leaving this prison house of flesh—that all our animosities and resentments should be erased from our memories; all the idiosyncracies which caused unhappiness here eradicated from the character and blotted out of memory, so that we might be able to enjoy an endless happiness, it is not a pleasant thing to be told, perhaps, that these personalities we are so fond of, that the few out of all the world we are able to care for as well as self, or better, will not endure forever, except as a memory in the soul. That the lower nature of the personality lives for a while in the shadowy land of desire beyond the grave, then fades out forever, while that which now feels “I am I,” shall be and has been from everlasting to everlasting, and shall, after a long period of rest, reappear again upon this earth under new circumstances, in a new body, with a new name and family; shall feel more or less strong loves and antipathies for special people; shall be well beloved by some, by others hated; shall bring sorrow to some and joy to others—all of which occurs under the unerring control of Divine Justice. What we have grown to be we shall be; “as the tree falleth, so it lieth.” As we strive against the enemy of self, the pride, the hatred, the selfishness and ignorance that is part of every one of us, so shall we come again and again to the earth to grow in the field of life, ever blossoming into greater glory—a ceaseless round of rest and toil; of planted field and fallow plain. This teaching seems indeed cold and heartless to those who shrink from labor and responsibility.

“There is a knowledge which is power; this is soul knowledge, not intellectual acquirement, but Divine knowledge—Theosophy. Possessed of the secrets of that Divine Spiritual Science, and becoming even as God, acts of power will be performed.” This Divine wisdom, this teaching which has been in the world since all time, which underlies and is the basis of all religion, declares for Universal Brotherhood in the Fatherhood of God.

I fear these words have been as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals in our ears. When we can look abroad and recognize in every degraded and misery-laden life a part of our own weakness, when we feel the tie that binds us to be so real, that we know the criminal belongs to our family, is manifesting a dart of our com-

mon weakness—"that he does but stumble in the path we are in weakness treading" (to paraphrase Longfellow's beautiful lines), we shall not be conscious of any coldness, for the warm glow of sympathy shall fill our lives. Only those who separate themselves from the great heart of humanity, in the seclusion of pride and egotism are sensible of coldness, consequent upon their self-exercised alienation; whoever will make himself consciously one, the synthesizing point in the great organism, Humanity, will be warmed with the whole current of Universal Love and Life that pulses like a mighty ocean through Soul to Soul.

But, in place of the majority of mankind manifesting the principle of Universal Brotherhood, as they should be doing at this age in the life of our planet, we seem only to be able to receive flashes of it when some great disaster threatens a large portion of the common body; as in the physical body, the members and organs function, unaffected by the small discomforts of life, but when a vital injury is sustained, the whole body responds in sympathy and the outermost ramifications of the citadel of life vibrate in answer to the call for help to bear the shock; so, mankind, in hours of desperate peril and wide-spread disaster, is thrilled from center to circumference by the common tie of Brotherhood. If this be true upon our material plane, then surely it is true upon every ascending plane of development. We are not only brothers here with those who now are in bondage to the flesh, but also brothers to those exalted and liberated minds, who wait on man and have left their "footprints on the sands of time; footprints, that perhaps another, seeing, shall take heart again."

[To be continued.]

Faith is the knowlege of the soul, *i. e.* of the Higher Ego, felt instinctively by the Kama Manasic Mind. When this Lower Mind is very strong, or the Higher has been for long in abeyance to the Lower, faith is weak, sometimes nil; for the soul then cannot impress its knowledge on the dense self entirely absorbed in externals.

God is the same white light coming through different colored glasses. "I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls."

BEHIND THE VEIL.

A DEPARTMENT FOR THE INVESTIGATION BY THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY OF PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES RELATING TO THE PSYCHIC LIFE.

Experiences and explanation of experiences are invited, but all personal or irrelevant details will be omitted.

When a soul turns centerwards and resolves to lift the veil of sense which hides its own being and that of correlated nature, it not infrequently finds itself confronted with terrible enemies and surrounded with intolerable conditions, for the reason that it has to traverse the many astral spheres and its own condition, its specific gravity, so to speak, may cause that soul to fall into Kama Loca depths and there suffer. The memories of the past, those elementals created by thought and desire, aroused by the soul's efforts to attain the freedom of the Selfless, muster their legions and bear down upon the soul whose freedom means their destruction. Especially is this true of a strong nature, one capable of feeling intensely the passion of life whether spiritual or earthy.

Theosophic literature cites many examples of aspirants to adeptship being whirled into evil courses, ending in untimely death or madness, because they dared too much before making themselves ready by long and complete purification. They had not conquered earth and water which means the transmutation of physical particles, of thought and desire, into more ethereal and spiritual conditions. Consequently, when consciousness entered the Astral regions it was drawn down into awful depths by latent impurities and unless help came to extricate the soul from these Astral horrors, insanity or crime must be inevitable. Truly does the "Voice of the Silence" say, "Beware lest thou shouldst set a foot still soiled upon the ladder's lowest rung. Woe unto him who dares pollute one rung with miry feet. * * * His vices will take shape and drag him down."

These words are no mere figure of speech; as many, no doubt, can testify to their truth, and the following experience, sent to us by a reader of MERCURY is not the only one of its kind that might be given if the secrets of consciousness were revealed:

To the Editor of Behind the Veil:

Dear Co-Worker—I send you a short account of an experience which came very near proving fatal to me. Perhaps it will be of

use as a warning or an encouragement to some who, like myself, may, in their earnestness to scale heaven, fall into hades. It was in the days of my first fervor and I should say, of my ignorance, when I thought that one might become an adept in a few months, or, at most, in a year or two. I determined to force my way to the goal. Was not Will omnipotent? I gave up everything to the work; devoted myself to concentration, to breathing. Animal food was given up and the amount of nourishment reduced to a minimum. Physical nature frequently rebelled against this sudden change of habits, for I had been always a lover of the good things of life; but my will took pleasure in subduing the rebellion. Conquer I would, no matter what might come. Several experiences came, which had I been less ignorant, would have warned me of danger; as it was, I hailed these danger signals as a proof of success.

One evening, just before putting out my light, my inner consciousness perceived a horrid form crawling rapidly towards my bed. The form resembled an intertwined mass of reptiles, part snake, part scorpion; the many bodies united in one head of human form, though anything but human in expression. "Ah," I said, "here are some Astral visitants; well, they will find me no easy match; I do not fear them." The thing crawled upon the bed and seemed to vanish within. Bidding the thing begone, I put out the light and went to sleep with the pride of a conqueror. I did not know the nature of my enemy. Towards morning I awoke from a vile dream, with a strange feeling of restlessness. I tried to concentrate, but the dream returned with many other similar dreams and held my thought. They photographed themselves on my brain. Will was powerless to banish them; then I felt myself drawn into a place of horror, fiends surrounded me, crimes unutterable were committed before my eyes, and these demon companions goaded me on to physical acts of like kind. In vain I fought against this condition; every effort seemed to draw me into greater depths of hellishness. I walked miles; I worked, I tried to analyze this persistent vision, but neither the din and bustle of a large city nor the charms of the country, nor work, nor reason broke for an hour the frightful spell. Sleep fled from me; strength grew less, volition became most difficult. Sometimes it seemed impossible to move a muscle and I would stand

or sit physically immovable, the inner consciousness intensely active in the hades of Kama Loca. I felt myself becoming a criminal, a lost soul.

What would have been the end I do not know, but after a month of torture, illness supervened—an accute attack of pleura-pneumonia brought on from exposure. In a desperate effort to free myself from the obsession I had sought battle with the storm with that result. Suffering has a great power of purification, it opens the eyes of the soul and brings it humbly to the feet of the Higher Self. I began to recognize that these tormenting fiends were of my own creation. They were the thoughts born of the books I had read, of the scenes and sense pleasures I had enjoyed, they were the secret desires scarcely known to myself, the selfishness, the hate, the perverted ideas that I had cherished, and that, in the Astral, had waxed strong and more wicked. Then when in my daring I tried to leap to the highest still having affinity with them, they dragged me down and claimed me as their own. This knowledge was a revelation and it brought comfort; for that which I had created I could also destroy. Instead of fighting I prayed; I asked others to pray for me. At last after two months of unsurpassed mental agony the obsession passed away from me; my soul rose from this Kama Loca hell to a place of comparative peace, wiser for the awful lesson. L.

[An awful lesson, indeed, but it surely teaches that only those who have found the Philosopher's Stone, that is, those who by slow and thorough transmutation have changed their base, earthy nature into the pure gold of the Higher Self may safely utter the supreme "I will" that makes the adept. "Only the clean of heart shall see God."—Ed]

Dreams that are due to the thoughts of others, to the thought-streams that come from without and flow through the passive brain, can be shut away entirely, if, before going to sleep, the person encloses himself in a protective shell; let him, by an effort of the imagination and will, form a shell round himself—imagine it formed—in his aura; the auric matter obeys his thought, and a protective shell is thus made which will exclude all ordinary thought-images coming from without. —X. in Vahan.

PRACTICAL THEOSOPHY.

This Department is intended to be one of Actual Experience. Any items showing the aid Theosophy gives in daily life will be welcome.

ANIMALS AS FOOD.

IT IS not intended in this article to enter into all the reasons which might be brought forward to urge abstinence from meat-eating, but only to mention a few facts. There are many passages in the Bible that recommend a vegetarian diet. The founders of the great religions abstained from flesh, as did also many of the Saints of the Catholic Church. Some of the most illustrious men in history, and most celebrated writers and philosophers, have upheld either theoretically or practically abstinence from flesh-eating. Poets in describing the Feasts of the Gods represent them as partaking of the fruits of the fields, and turning with horror from the bloody carcasses of animals.

Physically considered, man is not a carnivorous animal; his body, the temple of the Holy Ghost, is not meant to be also a burial ground for the corpses of brutes. Furthermore, if man were a real flesh-eating animal, he would swallow his prey as do the carnivora, skin, bones and hair; then he might expect to provide himself at the same time, not only with flesh and blood, but with strong bones and a natural covering.

Flesh-eating is at the root of many more evils than people generally suppose. The social problem would be more easily solved if people left the flesh-pots; the work of the humane societies would be done; the temperance orders and unions would become superfluous; there would be no need of anti-cigarette clubs; mankind would be raised physically, mentally and morally, for one ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.

"Man is what he eats," said the great German philosopher, Kant. If this is a true saying, need we wonder at the number of animals walking about in the guise of men, such as calves on two legs, cows without horns and geese without feathers?

We learn from science that in our physical bodies there is a constant process of decay and rebuilding. Every beat of the heart, every breath we draw, causes certain particles to pass off from the body; they must be replaced by others drawn from food

and air. We know that a certain diet produces particular characteristics; great indulgence in animal food imparts a coarse, sensual appearance. We also know, that every particle in any organic body has a life of its own and also partakes of the life of the whole body. Now, in animals the Karmic, or desire principle, is fully developed and unrestrained by Manas, or mind; so by taking into our system particles of their bodies, we are intensifying the tendencies of our own lower natures.

In the law of Manu it is stated: "Meat can never be obtained without injury to living creatures, and injury to sentient beings is detrimental to the attainment of heavenly bliss; let him, therefore, shun the use of meat. He who permits the slaughter of an animal, he who eats it up, he who kills it, he who buys or sells meat, he who cooks it and he who serves it up must all be considered as the slayers of the animal."

Indeed, the killing of animals in order to devour their flesh is an outrage on all humane feeling. Few of us are able to picture to ourselves, without shuddering, the scenes which take place early every morning, and in some cities all day long, in the innumerable slaughter-houses of the so-called civilized world. Let every one who eats flesh, try to take his thoughts to one of these places and perceive something of the feelings and passions stirred up in the animals as they are driven to their death. Behold the terror, the anguish and the misery depicted on their faces, as they come within the scent of blood, watch the agonized struggles of the sacrificed victims as they are dragged to the spot where knife or mallet slays them.

Such things degrade the world. If we want to eat meat we have either to kill the animals ourselves or have somebody else do it for us, and as we are, of course, "too refined" and "too delicate," we put this kind of work on somebody else, and allow this other party to reap the deteriorating effects of character which the slaughtering business produces. It is certainly not the kind of occupation that would be gladly taken up by a refined man or woman. I do not see why woman, especially the new woman, should be left out, as she does her share of the meat-eating. If every one had to catch hold of and slaughter their own oxen or sheep, there would be but little meat eaten.

Some flesh-eaters have said, if we did not eat the animals, the animals would eat us up. Have they ever yet heard of a grass-feeding animal eating up a man? I must confess, personally, I am not afraid of being devoured as a cabbage head by either ox, pig or sheep. Such excuses cannot shake the responsibility from anyone's shoulders. The moral sense teaches every one to do nothing that retards the progress of the world, or adds to its volume of misery. A time will surely come, when men will look upon flesh-eating, as they do now upon cannibalism; then they will not only be human, but also humane. CAROLINE KOFEL.

AROUND THE ZODIAC.

APRIL 22d, the sun enters the sign of Taurus, the bull, which symbolizes the power of breath-life, the virile strength of the new Cycle and the pro-creative forces of the earth. In the Cosmic man, Taurus corresponds to the organs of voice, to the throat with its delicate structure; hence it is held to represent the power of the Word—the sacred OM. Venus has this sign for her house.

The bull was sacred to the Egyptians and Assyrians, and, with the cow, is to-day held sacred in India.

The Agate is the gem of Taurus. Its plants and flowers are lilies, myrtle, moss, spinach, etc. It rules all opaque white stones.

Notice.

WHITE LOTUS DAY.—Branches of the T. S. and Centers not yet Branches, are here reminded that Friday, the 8th of May, will be the anniversary of the farewell of our beloved Teacher, H. P. B. Let all unite in celebrating White Lotus Day in the best manner possible.

THE NEO PLATONISTS OF ALEXANDRIA.—Next month MERCURY will begin the publication of a full synopsis of Mr. Mead's lectures on this period so interesting to all Theosophists.

The General Secretary of the Scandinavian Section T. S. is Dr. Gustaf Zander, No. 4 Jakthaföare Gaten, Stockholm, Sweden.

T. S. ECHOES.

English Letter.

Dear Editor:—The different activities recorded in my letter last month continue and are having most satisfactory results. The drawing room meetings held by Mr. Mead, Mr. Leadbeater and Mr. Bertram Keightly respectively, have awakened much interest in Theosophical teachings in quite new circles, and several of the visitors have become members or associates of the society. Mr. Mead's lectures at the Pioneer Club on the lives and teachings of the later platonists have been well attended. The course is shortly to appear as a series of articles in *Lucifer*. A good report of work has been received from Holland. A new center having been formed in Haarlem by Mynheer Van Manem, Mynheer W. B. Fricke gave the opening address.

Mr. Leadbeater, assistant secretary to the section, made a tour in the northwest of England last month, visiting the branches and giving lectures at Bristol, Plymouth Tavistock and Exeter.

Good reports come from Mrs. Besant in India. She is, as usual, working hard, lecturing, holding receptions and writing. Early in April she leaves for England, so that by the end of that month we shall once more have her with us. Queen's Hall, Langham Place, has been secured for all the Sunday evenings during May and June, and Mrs. Besant will deliver a course of lectures there.

The first volume of the translation of the Upanishads by Messrs. Mead and Chattopadhyaya has been published. It is a charming volume, printed, as many of the Sanscrit books are, with type running the length of the page, instead of across. We have only had time to take a glimpse at it, but it was enough to make us sure that all Theosophical students would shortly have in their hands a most useful help in their studies. The price being so low makes it possible for all members to possess a copy.

Another very interesting book is entitled, "Porphyry, the Philosopher, to his Wife, Marcella," (Redway), trans. by Alice Limmern. Notwithstanding the great importance and interest of this letter it is only now for the first time translated into English. The unfinished M. S. of Porphyry was first discovered in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. 1816; and several tests were published, but until now there has only been one Italian translation. At the age of seventy (302 A. D.), Porphyry married a Marcella, who was a widow with seven children. To comfort and console her during his enforced absense he sent her this famous "Letter." In it

the reader will find a most valuable epitome of the ethics of the great school to which Porphyry belonged, and we heartily recommend it to all students.

L. M. COOPER.

Here comes a message from Haarlem, Holland:
To the Editor of MERCURY, San Francisco, Cal.:

DEAR SIR:—Some days ago I came across a copy of your magazine, and my attention was drawn to the question on the cover, "How Has Theosophy Helped You?" Thinking over the question I came to a result which I send to you:

"Theosophy has helped me by making me contented with the people and things around me and discontented with myself. Formerly, I was content with myself and discontented with circumstances and environment. This discontentment with self leads me ever to seek the truth, and, thanks to the teachings of H. P. B. and the T. S., I see the light shining through the darkness of my ignorance. This is the help I have received from Theosophy.

I must thank you for the enjoyment which the reading of MERCURY gives me. I now take it regularly through the agency of Mr. W. B. Fricke, President of the Amsterdam Lodge. Accept my most hearty greetings and best wishes to you and your American fellow-workers in the great field of the Wisdom Religion. Your younger brother,

M. A. J. VAN MANEM.

In the early part of February, through the efforts of the Dutch Lodge at Amsterdam, a Theosophic center of six persons was formed at Haarlem. This center makes the third in Holland, and it hopes soon to become a Lodge.

Mr. Van Manem, whose friendly greeting appears above, is the leader of this center.

HONOLULA, H. I.—Advices just received from the Islands bring the news of the amalgamation of the two branches of the T. S. under the charter of the oldest, the Aloha Branch. The officers elected are—Wm. A. Marques, President; P. Jones, Secretary; G. W. Smith, Treasurer, and A. C. Abel, Librarian.

AUSTRALIA.—The Countess Wachtmeister and Mr. John C. Staples, General Secretary of the Australasian Section are expected to arrive in San Francisco about the middle of May. Branches on the Pacific Coast desiring a visit from either of these earnest workers will kindly communicate at once with the Editor of MERCURY. Eastern Branches will notify the Central States Committee of the T. S., at 26 Van Buren St., Chicago.

BOOK REVIEWS.

LUCIFER.—The editor in Watch Tower discusses the life of Dr. Anna Kingsford and throws much light on that extraordinary personality. There are some paragraphs that ought to be printed in extra large type and posted up in every place where Theosophists do meditate or congregate, namely those on the value of discrimination. Occultism soon becomes superstition if it be not preserved in the salt of common sense.

"Man and His Bodies" continues to clear away the mists that have obscured the Astral body, moreover, it gives invaluable instruction to the neophyte. "Orpheus" deals with numbers, music and the planetary spheres.

"Devachan" describes the human inhabitants of that region. "The Desire Body," Bertram Keightley; Every student should study this article. "Folk Lore" by W. F. Kirby. "Early Christianity and Its Teachings," continued. "Madame de Guyon and the Quietists," complete; a number of more than usual interest.

The Vedic Philosophy or an Exposition of the Sacred and Mysterious Monosyllable, Aum, is an exhaustive commentary on the Mandukya, Upanishad by Har Narayana. The introduction compares the Synthetic Philosophy of Herbert Spencer and modern scientific views with the Vedic teachings showing in a broad, sympathetic manner the similitude of thought between the Old and the New; also the failure of modern intellect to cognize spiritual truth. "The Veda does not repeat the historical facts which men with common intelligence can write, but it explains the higher truths which man, with his common sense and intellect, is not able to do. It treats of the immortality of the soul, its re-incarnation as a result of the actions performed by it in ignorance of Self, the way that leads to the knowledge of Self, and finally the mode of acquiring that knowledge which removes ignorance and secures emancipation from individuality when the soul finds itself as the one All-pervading Entity."

The writer explains the symbol and symbolic worship and shows that even Mohammedanism is not free from symbolic worship. All who call God "Father" or "Mother" symbolize.

"The Vedas teach that the sacred monosyllable 'Aum' is a symbol of the Absolute Deity."

"The trilateral monosyllable 'Aum' and the Atma of which it is a symbol have manifested themselves into trinities in the formation of speech and the universe respectively."

The "Analysis of the Word," Chapter-VII and Chapter XI, "Evidences of Sublimity of Aum" furnish some rare data for students of the Law of Correspondences. "We know that all metals when struck give a

nasal sound, the real and natural sound of Anaswara, the English 'ng' or M. The science of music is nothing but a knowledge of different modifications of the nasal sound of 'ng'."

The relation of the Word to states of consciousness will interest our western students who will find the work a valuable addition to their Theosophic library.

THEOSOPHIST, March.—This number of "Old Diary Leaves" fascinates the reader with reminiscences of the Brahma-Somaj of visits to Yogis, Yoginis, or receptions by Maharajahs, and of Colonel Olcott's first visit to Benares, now the seat of the Indian Headquarters.

"Psychism and Spirituality" (concluded) is an excellent article on this mooted question. The normal opening of the psychic faculties is here called Sakridagamin, the second step on the path of Initiation, but "Psychism" exercised for its own sake is ever tending to perpetuate differentiation by accentuating the interest of the one against the many, while "Spirituality" is ever pressing forward to the realization of the essential union of the many in one.

"A Scientific Explanation of Purity, etc.," deals with the power of thought, the potency of sound and of the word.

"Sanskrit's Nearest Neighbor," written in Mr. Johnstone's exquisite style shows the kinship between Sanskrit and Slavonian.

"Visions" contains some valuable instruction and interesting symbols.

"Jainism," a translation from an old Jain M. S., states the 28 miraculous powers possessed by Yogis. It also names the ineligible conditions 18 for men and 20 for women, which exclude individuals from ordination. "Roentgen's Magic Photography," by Huebbe Schleiden. "Symbols of God," "Battle Ground of Life," "Radical Brotherhood."

A letter from Colonel Olcott to a Parsee leader urging the Parsees to revive the beauty and purity of Zoroastrianism and to rescue its literature now scattered through Persia and Bactria.

"Cuttings and Comments," marks one of Mark Twain, who, while visiting the Parsee Towers of Silence, wrote in the record book: "One marvels to see here a perfect system for the protection of the living from contagion derivable from the dead. I mean one marvels to see this proof that modern science is behind the ancients in this so important matter."

THE VAHAN of March.—"The Enquirer" is specially interesting this month. Mr. Mead quotes from the works of Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais and disciple of Hypatia, several passages bearing upon reincarnation, Kama Loca, Accidents and the Cord connecting the Astral Double with the Physical Body are discussed. The answer to question concerning protective shells we reprint question and answer in full:

A.—In answer to question relating to dreams, "A. B." states that impressions impinging on the mind and brain, coming from without, can be shut out by forming an auric shell around the bodies. What is this shell composed of and how can it best be formed? In sleep, does it surround both the physical and astral bodies?

C. W. L.—The shell referred to may be formed in several different ways, and of various kinds of material, according to the special purpose for which it is designed. A man who passes out of the body in full consciousness in the Mayavirupa leaves his astral as well as his physical vehicle behind him, and, therefore, it would perhaps be most natural for him to protect his bodies by densifying the surface of the astral sufficiently to make it impenetrable, though he could, with equal ease, throw round it an exterior shell of whatever strength or thickness he desired, drawing his materials from the ocean of astral matter around him. The latter plan might also be adopted by a man who passed out consciously in the astral body, though in such a case a shell of etheric physical matter would probably be sufficient for his purpose. A method equally common and equally effective is to form, by a concentrated effort of will, an artificial elemental for the purpose of guarding the body, an elemental so created being a vigilant and extremely efficient watch-dog. For the man who, though conscious and active on the astral plane, is unable as yet to carry his consciousness through, without break, from one plane to the other, there is also a choice of two methods. He may either form an artificial elemental before going to sleep, as previously suggested; or before he starts on his travels after leaving his physical body, he may throw round it a shell of compressed astral matter. The man who has not yet developed much consciousness on the astral plane, and is, therefore, not likely to wander away from his body, will probably find that the easiest way to protect himself is to think when he lies down to sleep, of the aura which surrounds him, and to will strongly that the outer surface of that aura shall become a shell to protect him from the impingement of influences from without. In that case the auric matter will obey his thought; a shell will really be formed around him, and its condition will not be materially altered when the man in his astral vehicle withdraws from the body, for while he still floats close above it his shell will surround it as well as himself. People who have not specially studied the subject always fail to realize the tremendous power—the all but omnipotence—of thought; if men could but grasp the extent to which they have it in their power to mould themselves and their surroundings by steady, persistent thought they would not long be content to remain the undeveloped vacillating beings which we so often find them now. More important, even, than the formation of a shell before going to sleep is the acquirement of absolute control over the thought, so that

the mind may thereby become impervious to casual currents from the surrounding thought-ocean, and may be responsive only to the promptings of the higher Ego of its owner.

THE LOTUS BLEU of February contains a translation of "Occult Chemistry," by Annie Besant. "A Change of Personality" is concluded. This very remarkable narration of astral discoveries through hypnotic experiments has been translated into English and published in the "Theosophist." Mons. Lyffert writes on the "Inner Senses" and Amo discusses "Ignorance and Science." "The Astral Plane," of Mr. Leadbeater, is continued. "Occult Varieties" relates how an apparition gave warning of coming disaster. This number begins a Question Department and discusses "Esotericism," "Fixation of Thought," "The difference Between a Medium and a Psychic," etc. We quote from "Answer to Esotericism": "Esotericism has two aspects, the inferior, which relates to the planes of the quaternary; the superior relating to the Divine Ternary and its planes. The cerebral intellect plays an important part on all the planes of the quaternary * * * On the plane of the Divine Ternary this cerebral intellect, mind, (Kama Manas) disappears, for it is not of that kingdom. The word Esotericism applies specially to the consciousness and knowledge of the superior planes. Therefore, it is impossible to reveal this knowledge intellectually. Directions may be given; one may point out books which open intellectual channels leading to the foot of the *Wall*. But, in order to scale that wall, a *change* of body is necessary. That change of body does not mean dying. Our first duty is, then, not to hate ourselves; because to advance, we must have faith in ourselves first, and then in God. He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God."

THE BRAHMAVADIN of Feb. 1.—Editorial: "Social Ideal of the Vedanta." "They (Vedantic Scriptures) clearly recognize the value of the principle of heredity for the purpose of transmitting virtuous qualities from generation to generation. They point to the family as the training ground of all ethical and social virtues." "They emphatically declare that the nature of the food taken by a man can and does affect his character." "The Vedanta calls upon the knowing man not to seek wealth or power; it calls upon the powerful man not to seek wealth, and it exhorts the wealthy man to find his salvation through charity and the acquisition of true knowledge." Vivekananda writes on "Resist not Evil, or Karma Yoga." Feb. 15th, gives in its editorial the Vedantic teaching in regard to Karma. "The Vedanta Philosophy, according to Samkara." A letter from New York tells of the work of Vivekananda in New York and other cities in the United States.

THE EXODUS continues the exposition of 1st and 2d Chaps. of Genesis. International Bible Lessons discuss "Love to One's Neighbor," "Prayer," etc. "The Mastery of Fate" is full of helpful thoughts. The question, "How is Concentration Developed?" is very ably answered. "Growth, not temporary stimulation, is what souls need, and normal growth is found in the circumstances and conditions of everyday life when these are ruled from the within."

RECEIVED—*The Theosophic Thinker, Notes and Queries, The Temple of Health, Pacific Theosophist, Theosophic Gleaner, Theosophy in Australasia.*

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

[This Department will be devoted exclusively to children; questions and answers from Lotus Circles on Theosophical Subjects are invited and will receive special attention.]

FARSIFAL.

MANY years ago there lived among the mountains of Spain, a King named Amfortas, and a band of knights who, with him, spent their lives in devotion and the search for spiritual knowledge. They were the guardians of the Holy Grail, the sacred cup of spiritual life, whose splendors only the pure in heart could see.

Amfortas was the priest and leader of this band, offices which had fallen to him when his father grew too old to fill them. The chief duty of Amfortas was to preside at the Holy Feast when, with most solemn ceremonies, the "Sacred Cup" was unveiled and its wondrous radiance filled the hearts of the worshippers with joyful delight and heroic strength.

Some time before my story opens Amfortas committed some grievous faults and lost the Sacred Spear, one of the most cherished possessions of the Brotherhood.

Not very far from the Castle of the Grail—as was named the Castle of Amfortas and his Knights—there lived a wicked magician, named Klingsor, who was always seeking to destroy the Holy Brotherhood.

Amfortas had, in the pride of his strength, gone out to do battle against the magician, but he knew not his own weakness, and when temptations came he fell into the snares laid by his enemy, Klingsor, and by giving away to pride and sinful pleasure he put

himself in the power of the magician who stole from him the Sacred Spear. When Klingsor obtained the Spear, which he had tried so long to get, his first act was to pierce Amfortas with it. Then Amfortas awoke to a sense of his wrong-doing and found himself suffering great agony of body as well as the agony of mind, which a man feels who knows that he has fallen from the right path, and in the fall has lost the purity he once possessed. Moreover, Amfortas was no longer fitted to act as priest to the Brethren of the Holy Grail. Indeed, until the Sacred Spear was regained they could not hold the Holy Feast. They were permitted to assemble to pray, but no life-giving radiance, no mystic splendor shone forth from the Sacred Cup to strengthen and to bless.

Many remedies were tried for Amfortas' wound, but none of them were of any avail, nothing could give him back his health and peace of mind, but the regaining of the Spear. But this was felt to be so great and difficult a task, (for Klingsor's power was known to be very great) that the Knights all hesitated to undertake it. Further, there was a legend amongst the Knights, which told how there was but one man—the "guileless innocent," as he was called, who should be holy enough and brave enough to win back their treasure.

One day Gurnemanz, the eldest of the knights, was sitting in the wood outside the castle talking in sad tones to some of the younger knights, and telling them how the times were changed since the days when they all lived together in peace and happiness, strong in the might of Amfortas, blessed in the visions of the splendors of the Holy Grail and his firm belief that one day a pure and sinless man would come and restore to them the blessings they had lost. "But," continued Gurnemanz, "unless the guileless one comes soon my master, Amfortas, will be dead, and his old father, Titurel, will also die without the consolation of celebrating once more the Holy Feast."

At that very moment they were startled by seeing one of their loved and beautiful white swans flutter down on the lake and fall dead. At this they were very angry, for these birds were held sacred and were never allowed to be killed. They rushed eagerly to find out who it was who had thus dared to intrude upon

them, and, above all, to shoot at one of the sacred birds. They saw to their surprise a stranger—a young man with a bow in his hand, who was evidently the cause of the death of the poor bird, and when they accused him of the deed he made no attempt to deny it, indeed, he seemed surprised at their anger. For they were very angry with him, and Gurnemanz gave him a great scolding, and asked him how he dared go about killing the birds that did him no harm, but on the contrary, made the world the more beautiful for their being in it. As he talked the young man's face grew troubled. His slumbering intelligence seemed gradually to wake up, and he realized, for the first time, that he had been behaving as the enemy to the birds and beasts around him by always trying to take their lives, instead of making friends with them, and treating them as his younger brothers whom he was bound to love and care for. At last he burst into tears and breaking his bow across his knee, flung the bits far into the wood. Gurnemanz asked him many questions as to where he came from, and who were his parents, but the youth seemed ignorant of everything except his name, which he told them was Parsifal, or Perewale as we should call it.

Gurnemanz was interested in the youth, and told him of the Knights of the Grail, and how trouble had come upon them through Amfortas' guilt, trouble which could only be removed by that man who was pure enough and brave enough to win back for them the Spear from Klingsor, the wicked magician. Gurnemanz further told Parsifal that that very day they were to meet once again to try and hold their service, and he invited him to be present at the service. Parsifal thanked Gurnemanz and accompanied him to the castle, where they entered a lofty, pillared hall with a semi-circular table down the centre. There was a couch at one end, and in front of it a table on which was placed the Grail—the Holy Cup—covered with a cloth. From the gallery running around the top of the building there came the sound of sweet young voices singing a hymn, and as Parsifal stood where Gurnemanz left him the knights came in a procession, also chanting hymns. Last of all Amfortas was carried in and placed on the couch prepared for him. Amfortas offered up a prayer begging pardon for his wrong-doing and the sorrow he had brought on

his knights. After this prayer the sacred cup was unveiled and held up before the gaze of the brotherhood, who were gladdened to see a brilliant ray of light illuminate the vessel and shed its lustre on all around.

Parsifal stood entranced. He did not notice the departure of the knights from the hall and that all was silent around him. Thus he stood till Gurnemanz shook him briskly asking if he were dreaming. But Parsifal was not dreaming; he was pondering upon that which he had seen, and he went forth from the castle firmly resolved to find the Sacred Spear and restore it to Amfortas. By this act the wound of Amfortas would be cured and the Holy Grail once again shed its blessed light upon the King and his knights.

So Parsifal went forth to wander in the world with the goal always before him of finding the Sacred Spear, but he sought it many a long day before he found it, as indeed all must do who search for it. For this Spear represents spiritual truth or knowledge, and it was that which Amfortas had lost when he had forgot his mission of fighting against the evil of the world and fell into sin—seeking only his own personal, worldly pleasure, instead of seeking to overcome the evil of the world. Thus he had come under the power of the wicked magician, for as long as he was himself pure, evil had no power over him, and only when he arrayed himself on the side of evil against the good was Klingsor able to take from him the Spear.

But Klingsor was not for long to sully the Sacred Spear by having it in his possession—he was not long to be the possessor of that knowledge which he only used for evil purposes, and although he felt safe in his wicked power, yet the time had nearly come, and Parsifal was on his way to wrest the Spear from the magician's grasp.

Klingsor knew that Parsifal was going to fight him, and he summoned all his magic arts to make him fall as Amfortas had fallen. He turned his gloomy castle into a wonderful garden full of all kinds of beautiful flowers and trees, and he transformed his slaves into lovely enchantresses, who were to beguile Parsifal into renouncing his high mission, and dwelling with them in Klingsor's power. But Klingsor underrated the power of right-

eousness—he had not learned that where all is pure and spotless there evil has no chance, that right is more powerful than might, and that goodness must conquer evil in the end, however fierce may be the battle. When Parsifal found himself in the enchanted scene prepared for him by Klingsor he was bewildered for a while, but as soon as the first suggestion of evil came to him he braced himself for a fight to withstand all the temptations with which he felt himself to be surrounded, and no lures that Klingsor put forth could tempt him to turn aside from the quest to which he had consecrated his life. This made Klingsor very angry, and finally he himself appeared, and threatened Parsifal with all sorts of evil if he did not go away immediately. But Parsifal—strong in the strength of his purity and good intentions—told the magicians that he had come to get the Sacred Spear, and that he had no intention of going away without it. This put Klingsor into a furious passion, and raising the Spear above his head he hurled it with all his force at Parsifal. But now a curious thing happened. Instead of striking him and wounding him the Spear remained above Parsifal's head and he put up his hand and took it. Thereupon with one great thundering noise the castle of the magician fell down and Klingsor was buried in the ruins. For as it ever is no evil has power against good. It is only the evil within us that attracts the evil without, and the two coming together overcome us. But when evil is met by good the evil has no power to harm, but is swallowed up by the good. Unless Parsifal had kept himself pure he would have been powerless against Klingsor; but, strong in the strength of goodness he had vanquished the powers of darkness.

He hastened to the castle, where he found Amfortas almost at death's door, the knights full of grief and forebodings. But now the Sacred Spear was restored to them and how the prophecy was fulfilled that one should come in whom there was no guile, who should give them back their sacred emblem, and enable them to meet again at the Holy Feast, and who should be to them from that time forth their priest and their leader. For Amfortas would not take again his old position. A greater than he had arisen—one who had been tried in the fires of temptation,

and who had come out victorious, and who should thenceforward lead his knights to higher thoughts and purer lives. Amfortas gladly and humbly resigned his office in favor of Parsifal. Parsifal, who had gone out against evil and had conquered it with good.

ETHEL M. MALLET.

GRASS.

Gather a single blade of grass, and examine for a minute, quietly, its narrow sword-shaped strip of fluted green. Nothing, as it seems there, of notable goodness or beauty. A very little strength, and a very little tallness, a few delicate lines meeting in a point—not a perfect point neither; made, as it seems, only to be trodden on to-day, and to-morrow to be cast into the oven; and a little pale and hollow stalk, feeble and flaccid, bending down to the dull brown fibres of roots. And yet, think of it well, and judge whether of all the gorgeous flowers that beam in summer air, and of all strong and goodly trees, pleasant to the eyes or good for food—stately palm and pine, strong ash and oak, scented citron, hardened vine—there be any by man so deeply loved, by God so highly graced as that narrow point of feeble green.

Consider what we owe merely to the meadow grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorions enamel, by the companies of those soft and countless spears. The fields! All spring and summer is in them, the walks by silent scented paths, the rests in noonday heat—the joy of herds and flocks, the life of sunlight upon the world falling in emerald streaks, in soft blue shadows, where else it would have struck upon the dark mould, or scorching dust, pastures beside the passing brooks, soft banks and knolls of lowly hills, thymy slopes of down overlooked by the blue line of lifted sea, crisp lawns all alive with early dew, or smooth in evening warmth of barred sunshine dinted by happy feet; all these are summed in these simple words—the grassy fields.

Observe the peculiar character of the grass, which adapt it especially for the service of man, are its humility and its cheerfulness. Its humility is that it seems created only for lowest service, appointed to be trodden on, and fed upon. Its cheerfulness, in that it seems to exult under all kinds of violence and suffering. You roll it and it is stronger the next day; you mow it and it

multiplies its shoots, as if it were grateful; you tread upon it, and it sends up richer perfume. Spring comes, and it rejoices with all the earth, glowing with variegated flame of flowers weaving in soft depth of fruitful strength. Winter comes and though it will not mock its fellow-plants by growing then, it will not pine and mourn, and turn colorless as they. It is always green; and is only the brighter and gayer for the hoar frost. —*Ruskin*

AIDS.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN MARCH NUMBER.

28.—The Sacred Lotus of India and Egypt is a species of water lily akin to the pond lily of New England; though called water lilies they are not of the true lily family. As you know these plants are born of fire and water rather than of fire and earth, and for ages the lotus symbolizes the productive forces of both spiritual and physical nature. In Indian works lotus is used to designate a life center as the heart or a nerve center as the brain. The lily of the Catholic Church is a symbol derived from the lotus.

29.—The real happiness is most certainly a condition of the mind. It may be enhanced by environment, but no environment can make happiness. One can be miserable in a palace or happy in a prison. The true self lives in bliss and when our consciousness expands out of the false self into the true self we shall be happy in spite of hunger or pain, or the world's seeming cruelty or injustice.

30.—Instinct is the memory and knowledge inherent in the molecules of all forms of life and also in the astral form of man. It impels the mineral to crystalize, the plant to seek the sun, the bird to build its nest, the mother to care for her child.

Intuition is a ray from the consciousness of the Higher Ego and brings perception of spiritual truths. The word intuition is applied inaccurately to a sensitive condition of nerves and mind which enables one to sense, mental conditions, to perceive the shadows cast by coming events, but these presentments are not intuition, but rather a high form of instinct.

The question of killing noxious insects, reptiles, etc., must be

left to the conscience of each individual. If one feels that it is wrong to kill a flea, a mosquito or a snake, then it is wrong; but if on the contrary one feels that to rid the world of these forms is a sacred duty then it is that person's duty to kill. Some time in the history of a soul the warrior stage must be bravely accepted and fulfilled. It is not the killing but the feelings that goes with the killing that is condemned. If you must kill a rattlesnake do it as an act of love; for love destroys noxious forms in order to create beneficent forms. If you kill the snake in fear, hate or irritation you help to perpetuate the malevolent form which those feelings take on when they appear in animal life. Killing should be done in a kindly spirit with a wish and a suggestion that the forces thus liberated take on a form that brings good to the world and man.

NEW QUESTIONS.

32.—Why is there so much stress laid on the fact of some particular person being a very high Chela or Adept? Have not all persons the possibility of so becoming?

33.—Is some unexpected or wonderful event supposed to take place at the close of the Cycle?

34.—Please give me a clear distinction between the Personality and the Individuality?

35.—How can a Soul possibly be lost?

We are never without help. We have no right to say of any good work, it is too hard for me to do; or of any sorrow, it is too hard for me to bear; or of any sinful habit, it is too hard for me to overcome.

OBITUARY.

The 21st of March William Q. Judge quitted this sphere of activity. The news saddened all for every heart kept a shrine sacred to the well-beloved co-worker, of H. P. B. We remember only his virtues, which were many, his talents which were great, and we know that the good he did for the many years he labored as the Vice-President of the T. S. and Secretary of the American Section will bless his name for all time. All honor to his memory.